

Internationalization of Evaluation

Internationalization is on the agenda of evaluators everywhere because skills (the art of evaluation), standards (the discipline of evaluation) and methods (the delivery of evaluation) are being transformed by the impact of globalization on national and local institutions.

According to Kofi Annan: *“Ours is a world in which no individual and no country exists in isolation. All of us live simultaneously in our own communities and in the world at large ... We are all influenced by the same tides of political, social and technological change. Pollution, organized crime and the proliferation of deadly weapons likewise show little regard for the niceties of borders; they are problems without passports.”*

Globalization has gone hand in hand with increased inequality: in 1999, the ratio of per capita income between the richest countries, e.g. Switzerland (\$38,350), and the poorest, e.g. Niger (\$190), was 200 to 1.¹ Two and a half centuries ago, the gap was only about 5 to 1. The impact of these trends has been phenomenal. Social and environmental pressures have risen everywhere and we now live in a world where the problems of others have become our own.

According to Amartya Sen, “The central issue of contention is not globalization itself, nor is it the use of markets as an institution, but the inequity in the overall balance of institutional arrangements – which produces very unequal sharing of the benefits of globalization.”

Thus, internationalization in the objects of evaluation is essential because the impact of globalization on the poor has yet to be properly assessed. There is no greater challenge to humanity today and evaluators are mandated to speak truth to power. They ought to turn their attention towards global issues given the injustice of a policy framework which results in almost half of the world’s population subsisting on less than \$2 a day (2.8 billion out of 6 billion people) and a fifth of them (1.2 billion) on less than \$1 a day.

Globalization is severely under-managed as well as poorly evaluated. The business sector has adapted to the new border-less economy. So has the voluntary sector, globally interconnected thanks to the new information technologies. Not so the public sector. To be sure, informal networks are multiplying and tailor made alliances are sprouting up among public officials, business firms and non-governmental organizations. But they have tended to operate in isolation and sometimes at cross-purposes and monitoring of their results, let alone objective evaluation, have been the exception rather than the rule. The scale and intensity of cross boundary challenges is outstripping the capacities of individual states and international organizations. A crucial task for evaluation in the new century is to help fill the global public policy gap.

Internationalization: What?

Globalization and internationalization are not easily segregated. In fact, internationalization is but a facet of globalization. Five years ago, Eleanor Chelimsky and William Shadish wrote

“evaluation is becoming international but in ways that go beyond previous conceptions of what international means. International is no longer used only to describe the efforts of particular evaluators in individual countries around the world ... Today, evaluation is becoming international in the sense of being at the same time more indigenous, more global and more transnational.”

Since then the evaluation internationalization process has accelerated because of rising popular expectations regarding economic progress and the promise that evaluation can improve accountability of decision-making as well as social learning. Within individual countries, the evaluation agenda has become internationalized because decision makers in all arenas of society have had no choice but to take account of the effects of globalization on their activities.

As a result of these trends, the evaluation profession has become more diverse and *indigenous*. It has had to adapt to the vastly different circumstances found around the world. It has also become more global in the sense that most economic and social developments in one part of the world now affect the rest of the world. Finally, evaluation has acquired *transnational* features in tackling programs that extend beyond national borders.

Given the increased diversity and complexity of evaluation products and services associated with globalization, artistry, in the sense of creativity, has flourished. Second, the discipline of evaluation has come under stress since it has proven impractical to agree on meaningful evaluation standards across cultures and evaluation domains. On the other hand, the bracing impact of real life applications has given the various disciplines that make up the profession verve, resiliency and adaptability and the delivery of evaluation has gone global. Websites now carry evaluation products to all corners of the world and facilitate cross-border interchanges among evaluators.

Internationalization: Why?

The liberalization of trade and capital markets have led national governments to devolve their authority vertically (to regional and local bodies) as well as horizontally (through partnerships with private and nongovernmental organizations) thus giving rise to the new public management movement. Together with the new emphasis on “governance” in developing countries, the focus on results has given a great fillip to evaluation. It is no longer the Cinderella it once was, being regularly invited to the ball of government policy-making and budget management.

In the ascending voluntary sector, popular demands for legitimacy have raised the profile of evaluation and induced innovation in participatory evaluation across borders. In parallel, evaluation has become a key instrument of advocacy. This is related to the communications revolution, the integration of markets and rising public concerns about the social and environmental stress associated with economic growth and demographic expansion.

Conversely, it is partly because civil society organizations have built up their monitoring and evaluation skills that business enterprises have moved towards triple bottom line reporting. By now corporate social responsibility concerns have made evaluation an integral part of business management. This development is linked to the increasingly global nature of private

investment and its expansion to countries where regulatory frameworks are weak or non-existent.

The impact of globalization has been variable. But everywhere, new roles for the state, new business practices and new forms of voluntary associations have emerged to deal with a dynamic, integrated and volatile global order. The evaluation profession has had to respond. First, it has facilitated the global transformation. Second, it has expanded and innovated in order to fulfill its new functions.

Internationalization: Who?

Internationalization of evaluation would not have taken place without global networks through which the profession was able to transmit its ideas and its skills. The *accounting and auditing* industry has been an especially effective channel for accountability oriented evaluation activities. Deeply grounded in the global market economy, it has been a major factor behind the internationalization of evaluation. This strong and well-resourced branch of the extended evaluation family has been shaken by recent corporate scandals. But it is recovering through a combination of modest reform and effective public relations. Its “value for money” audits, its comprehensive audits and its forays into environmental monitoring and corporate social responsibility reporting confirm that it belongs under the big tent of the evaluation profession.

Policy research also operates across national boundaries. It is rooted in economics, the queen of the social sciences. It enjoys credibility with a wide range of policy makers. Recently, it has begun to address development effectiveness issues and it is championing evidence based policy analysis and randomized social experiments. In an effort to add value to society, it is moving away from abstract doctrines and quantitative models. As a result, it is trespassing across disciplinary boundaries and providing leadership to the other social sciences. Thus, it too can claim to be part of the extended evaluation family and it has contributed handsomely to its internationalization.

The *global consulting industry* has also played its part in the internationalization of evaluation. It has grown relentlessly over the past three decades through shrewd adaptation to the new opportunities offered by globalization, outsourcing and the new information technologies. It is stressing the delivery of specialized services; experimenting with results oriented contracts and marketing itself as a business partner rather than a mere channel of technocratic advice to management. Its foundations are in the corporate sector but it is also claiming the public sector and the developing world as its frontier markets.

The advent of a *voluntary sector* interconnected globally through the new information technologies has been instrumental in the internationalization of evaluation. It has transformed the environment for development activities and private business across borders. Hundreds of non-governmental organizations have burst onto the global scene to deliver services, empower local organizations and lobby for selected causes. They are subjecting development organizations and corporate operations, processes and policies to external verification and relentless advocacy. They are also teaming up with reformers within the aid establishment and the private sector to subject international operations to independent verification of social, environmental and ethical standards.

Finally, *development evaluators* have played a unique role in the internationalization process. They are now connected across boundaries through the evaluation cooperation group of the multilateral development finance institutions; the evaluation working party of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD; the interagency evaluation working group of the United Nations and now IDEAS (the International Development Evaluation Association), the most recent addition to family of professional associations.

Development evaluators have pioneered evaluation methods at the level of projects, programs and policies. They have endorsed common evaluation principles. A glossary of terms used in development evaluation and results based management has been published. Good practice standards for project evaluations have been produced. An international program for development evaluation training sponsored the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department and Carleton University has been established.

Development evaluators represent a large professional group by any standard. Hundreds of professional evaluators currently work in bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and in civil society organizations concerned with development. Through capacity building and training, the size of the evaluation profession within developing countries is growing rapidly.

In brief, development evaluation now represents a distinct branch of the profession. It has acquired legitimacy the hard way -- through the independence and excellence of its activities. It has influenced the quality of development operations funded by aid through systematic monitoring and reporting on results, regular review of operational policies and contributions to knowledge management and training. It has moved from project evaluations to the higher plane of country program evaluation and it has shaped policy making in such diverse fields as forestry, gender, resettlement, the environment, social funds, micro-enterprises and large dams.

Internationalization: What Next?

The evaluation profession is now poised for another major advance at the international level. Results orientation has been accepted as a fundamental principle of development cooperation. All United Nations members have endorsed the Millenium development goals. They emphasize poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and social progress. Improved arrangements for aid coordination are being put in place under the aegis of poverty reduction strategies owned by governments of poor countries in consultation with the private sector and the civil society.

Evaluation and tracking systems form an integral part of this development strategy. This means that evaluation capacity will have to be constructed "on the ground" thus giving a further impetus to the internationalization of evaluation by expanding the frontier of professional evaluation to the developing world where over 80 percent of the world's population lives.

The emerging development evaluation framework will go beyond aid to embrace the major transmission belts of globalization. Beyond aid, evaluation will have to examine policies that impact on international trade, migration, intellectual property, private finance and the environment. Policy and institutions matter at the global level just as they do at the country and

local levels. Methodologically, global policy factors usually treated as exogenous in development evaluations will gradually be internalized since they are critical drivers of sustainable poverty reduction that are manmade rather than immutable laws of nature.

From Internationalization to Globalization

The future directions of evaluation will continue to evolve in response to internationalization. This will affect the objects, methods and structures of evaluation. In particular, the focus of development evaluation once exclusively directed towards the south will have to shift towards the north. The unit of account that had gradually moved from the project level to the higher plane of the country assistance strategy will have to move up once again -- to the global level. Only then will the thorny problem of attribution in performance assessments be resolved credibly. .

International evaluation alliances currently pursued through bilateral arrangements will have to evolve towards multilateral forms. This will make it possible to put the country at the center of country assistance evaluations and the global development community at the center of sector/thematic evaluations while avoiding evaluation bombardment.

If evaluation is to be judged by its results then the processes through which evaluations are conducted will have to “owned” by the partners and designed with the same amount of care as the methodologies. Hence, more efforts will have to be channeled into the collaborative design of global evaluations for accountability to be served, transparency to be assured and legitimacy of evaluation results to be recognized by all participants.

Thus, a global perspective in development evaluation has implications not only for the objects and methods of evaluation but also for its structures. They will need to be adapted to a development business increasingly driven by global concerns and managed through formal partnerships and informal networks encompassing government, the private sector and the civil society. In particular, professional networks linking the developed and developing countries will have to be strengthened and the time has come for a greater focus of evaluation on the global drivers of poverty reduction.

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